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ABSTRACT

This paper compares and discusses the relationship between research findings in the areas of the transcendent teacher-learner relationship and the invitational class climate. The transcendent relationship is described as one wherein relators are able to transcend their realities, transform their life direction, and move beyond the historically defined parameters for teacher and learner roles. The invitational class climate is a perceptually-based, self-concept approach to the teaching-learning process. It is suggested that a transcendent teacher-learner relationship can be invited through an interactive process established via a process called "The Grow with Guidance System." Research comparisons revealed the following common characteristics: reciprocity; integrity; self-concept development and integration; the ongoing inviting growth process and the transcendent turning point encounter; community; and love. Development of these factors may result in maximizing the possibility for the occurrence of transcendent teacher-learner relationships. Invitations sent to students affect their self-concepts in a way that may then effect a prevention and avoidance of self destructive patterns and behaviors. (Contains 27 references.) (LL)

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A Comparison View: The Characteristics of the Transcendent Teacher-Learner Relationship and the Invitational Climate Created via The Grow With Guidance System

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Abstract

This paper provides a comparison view of existing research and discusses the relationship between the research findings in the areas of the *transcendent teacher-learner relationship* and the *invitational class climate.* The transcendent relationship is one that moves beyond historically defined parameters for the teacher and learner roles. Ultimately, in such a relationship relators are able to transcend their realities and transform their life directions.

The past research in transcendent teacher-learner relationships (O'Hara, 1992) and the creation of the inviting climate via The Grow With Guidance System (Radd, 1988) suggest the possibility that the transcendent teacher-learner relationship can be invited through the interactive process established via The Grow With Guidance System. Both researchers discovered similar information that can be integrated and intentionally applied within the learning process to maximize the possibilty for the creation of a transcendent student encounter.

A comparison of the research conducted by Radd (1988) and O'Hara (1992) provide the base for the following results and conclusions. Primary characteristics common to their research are those of: 1. reciprocity 2. integrity 3. self-concept development and integration 4. the ongoing inviting growth process and the transcendent turning point encounter 5. community, and 6. love.

The development of these factors may result in maximizing the possibility for the occurance of transcendent teacher-learner relationships. The *invitations* sent to students affect their self-concepts in a way that may then effect a prevention and avoidance of self destructive patterns and behaviors.

A Comparison View: The Characteristics of the Transcendent Teacher-Learner Relationship and the Invitational Climate Created via The Grow With Guidance System

Expanded realization has occured within the educational community regarding the importance of a healthy teacher-student relationship, an inviting class climate, and a positive self-concept for maximum student learning. Research and investigation of new paradigms have triggered innovative ways of viewing the learning process.

This paper provides a comparison view of existing research and discusses the relationship between the research findings in the areas of the transcendent teacher-learner relationship and the invitational class climate. The transcendent relationship is one that moves beyond historically defined parameters for the teacher and learner roles. These extraordinary relationships lead to profound changes in each relator's perception of life and its purpose for them. Ultimately, relators are able to transcend their realities and transform their life directions.

Background

The mounting outcry for improvement in education signals researchers and practitioners to examine extraordinary learning phenonmena that soar above the symptoms of an otherwise ailing system. Such phenomena include the *transcendent teacher-learner relationship* and the *invitational classroom climate*. The definition and characteristics of these form the base of the information given.

Transcendent teacher-learner relationships, defined as spontaneously occurring ones that exceed traditional roles of interaction, result in turning point encounters for one or both relators. Having had such an encounter, the individual is never again quite the same,

as perceptions are changed and life goals are altered. Teacher and learner move beyond the historical preoccupation with the learner's receptive need. Such relationships are never assigned, but instead they require two self-motivated relators who share a biographically oriented connection.

Invitational education is a perceptually-based, self-concept approach to the teaching-learning process anchored on four propositions: (a) that people are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly; (b) that education should be an activity; (c) that people possess untapped potential in all areas of human development; and, (d) that potential can best be realized by places, policies, and programs which are specifically designed to invite development, and by people who are intentionally inviting with themselves and others, personally and professionally (Purkey & Novak, 1984).

An *i*nvitational classroom climate comes as a result of creating an environment based on the four propositions of invitational education. As a result of creating the inviting environment, the teacher and learner have an environment needed to create the possibility for the transcendent relationship to occur.

Past Research

The theoretical framework for this paper derives from an integrated body of educational literature. That body of literature includes educational philosophy, educational psychology, counseling, and learning theory.

The following thematic constructs contributed to the conceptualization of the dynamics of the transcendent teacher-learner relationship. Educators need to look beyond, or transcend historical hierarchical dominance and submission patterns long established for human relationships (Macdonald,1974). Teacher and learner must move beyond secure

boundaries of endeavor to drop off conventions, rubrics and systems (Moustakas,1966). The teacher 's traditional governance stance over children needs to be replaced by a new pedagogy of throughtfulness and openness. Such a pedagogy involves the tactful mediation of love and care, hope and trust, and responsibility (Van Manen,1991). For any contemporary form of genuine education , affection and love must play a key role. Relationships aren't established by virtue of position or official roles, but by unselfish, at times stern and demanding, love (Spranger,1972).

It is desirable for both teacher and learner to be viewed as unfinished beings who mutually engage in the recreation of knowledge, each one teaching the other (Friere,1989). Such a relationship is characterized by mutualilty, directness, presence, openness, trust and security. Rather than to thicken the distance between teacher and learner, an atmosphere of mutual confidence and dialogue is created wherein one "touches" the other (Buber,1958). Good teaching is the capacity for mutuality and regard. Teachers may create an atmosphere characterized by the "full sharing feeling relationship" among teachers and learners who come together in a particular way (Greene,1985). The teacher does not protect self from uncertainty or perplexity, but instead aspires to be spiritually aware. The transcendence oriented educator is responsive to the uniqueness of human potentiality (Phenix,1974).

Carl Rogers replaces the traditional conceptual role of the teacher with that of *facilitator*, or one who creates a subtle, non-threatening atmosphere where learners are accepted and freed to learn. The facilitator is willing to risk for the learner and has three essential attitudes, that of *genuineness* (realness), *prizing* (trust, faith, confidence, attentiveness) and *empathetic understanding* (Rogers, 1969). A secure base for relationship between the teacher and learner is composed of trust and openness (Moustakas,1981). The

teacher must "feel with the learner" to create an atmosphere of care, of warm acceptance and safety. In this way, barriers are removed, trust is established, and the learner is safe to risk (Noddings,1984). Risk plays a key role in an educational view of the learner as a free entity. Trust is a particular kind of risk, and it is a prerequisite to any atmosphere of security (Bollnow,1972).

Significant bonds between relators may be established through an*encounter*, a meeting of harmony, mutuality, and oneness. Within such a context a *turning point* may occur, which is "a process involving the expanding of awareness, the emergence of new identity and steps toward new life" (Moustakas, 1977). Closely related is Abraham Maslow's *peak experience*. The peak experience may signal a turning point which results in a major decision or the formulation of new attitudes, values, and interests (Maslow,1968).

Education means being a part of a network of relationships, or a *community*, in which those involved are free of the tenuousness imposed by roles. An unthreatening but challenging atmosphere is created, one full of hospitality and the tension of creativity (Palmer, 1983). Maxine Greene refers to a "community of equals" in which people learn to act in concert with one another (1988) in spaces for possibility (1982). Obstacles are transcended, understanding is gained (1988), "persons are enabled to see what they already know, somehow differently" (1984b).

The past research in transcendent teacher-learner relationships (O'Hara, 1992) and the creation of the inviting climate via The Grow With Guidance System (Radd, 1988) suggest the possibility that the transcendent teacher-learner relationship can be invited through the interactive process established via The Grow With Guidance System. Both researchers discovered similar information that can be integrated and intentionally applied

within the learning process to maximize the possibilty for the creation of a transcendent teacher-learner encounter.

O'Hara discovered that in transcendent relationships, teachers and learners risked themselves to go beyond, or to transcend traditional roles. The sharing of the qualities of trust, mutuality, care, intimacy, grace, challenge, freedom and humor, are ways in which relators were able to transcend, and to become different. The personal biographies of relators also played a significant role in the establishment of deeper relations. Many of the relationships studied had endured for decades, and were mutually rewarding and transformative for those involved.

Radd discovered that: 1. Teachers who use the Grow With Guidance System are perceived and reported by students as utilizing greater invitational teaching practices which effect class climate and environment; 2. The Grow With Guidance System demonstrated a positive effect on the self-control of students; and 3. Teachers report feeling better about themselves, feeling better about their teaching, have made changes to their teaching approach, and report better teacher-student interaction.

This research demonstrates a competency-based guidance system may need to be considered by educators as a core program within the classroom to create and maintain an inviting classroom climate. This approach included The Grow With Guidance System (Radd, 1993a &b). This system essentially encourages students and teachers to develop skills, positive self-concepts, attitudes and behaviors which are supported and further enhanced by an inviting learning climate.

Comparison of Research and Characteristics

A comparison of the research conducted by Radd (1988) and O'Hara (1992) provide the base for the following results and conclusions. Primary characteristics common to their research are those of: 1. reciprocity 2. integrity 3. self-concept development and integration 4. the ongoing inviting growth process and the transcendent turning point encounter 5. community, and 6. love.

The transcendent teacher-learner relationship is a reciprocal, equal, and frequently collegial relationship in which the tone is personal; both parties *expect* to learn from each other (O'Hara, 1992). *Cointentionality* (Friere, 1989), *mutual involvement* (Shaffer, 1977), and *joint pilgrimage* (Macdonald,1974) are terms that characterize the relational dynamic of mutuality, humility and personal revelation. There is also a reciprocal relationship between what teachers gain while interacting with guidance system concepts and activity experiences and the students who they hope to help (Radd, 1988). For example, when a teacher conducts a self-concept activity with the classroom of students, the teachers benefit from the experience as much as the students because the teacher is interacting with the information and experience as much as the students. This reciprocal effect can have a significant positive impact on the development of the invitational classroom climate.

Honoring the integrity of every student and teacher is integral for the creation of the inviting environment and for the transcentent teacher-learner relationship. The behaviors needed to convey those messages of integrity are inherent in the interactions required with The Grow With Guidance System. Personal and professional integrity are essential in that they precede efforts for growth and relationship.

Transcendent teacher-learner relationships contribute to the healthy development and growth of the self-concept of both the teacher and learner. Transcendent relators repeatedly remarked that their relationships made them feel they "mattered", that they were "worth something". Relators acquired a sense of what has been called "unrealized possibilities" (Phenix,1974). In the transcendent teacher-learner relationship, a close connection exists between dignity and respect on the one hand, and acceptance and unconditional love on the other. Invitational education is a perceptually-based, self-concept approach to the teaching-learning process which requires that the teaching-learning process be based in seeing and interacting with *all* people in ways that create environments which support the healthy development and growth of the self-concept of both the teacher and learner.

Turning points may occur for those engaged in the ongoing inviting growth process and transcendent teacher-learner relationships. Turning points involve "the expanded awareness, the emergence of new identity and steps toward new life" (Moustakas, 1977). Transcendent relators were enabled to replace thoughts of loneliness, hopelessness and even suicide with visions of hope and dreams filled. Turning points can evolve when teachers interact with The Grow With Guidance System process as demontrated by teacher self-report findings. Teachers interacting with The Grow With Guidance System report feeling better about themselves, feeling better about their teaching, have made changes to their teaching approach, and report better teacher-learner interaction. These teacher self-report findings reflect turning point experiences which resulted from the teachers interacting with The Grow With Guidance System process.

Transcendent teacher-learner relationships collectively may form a network of relationships wherein individuality is not only upheld, but valued. That community comes

when individuals respect each other in a way that is not possible when individuals compete against each other (Moustakas,1977 and Palmer,1983), but when there is mutual support and all-inclusiveness. The inviting classroom climate creates an environment wherein teachers and learners are responsible for sending invitations of all-inclusiveness which support the development of community.

Unconditional love fills the gaps that present themselves in the transcendent teacher-learner relational interaction. Love opens the possibility for ever deepening rapport and for more profound relation. Love offers the capacity to strive for and to accept, something more than would otherwise exist. Love is expressed in transcendent teacher-learner relationships through flexibility, care, intimacy, trust, and grace, the environment for which is created through the inviting classroom climate. The invitational classroom climate maintains the environment which provides consistency and congruence for relaying expressions of unconditional love messages.

Discussion

Because of the powerful, often profound, positive impact the relationships have had on participants, it seems reasonable to conclude that the above research has implications for both theory and practice. Teachers and learners engaged in transcendent teacher-learner relationships are enabled to overcome common educational dilemmas such as learner non-engagement, non-ownership of the learning process, and teacher-learner alienation and estrangement. The transcendent learning relationships studied expanded participant awareness and sense of possibility. Love is acknowledged as critical in the development of ever deepening rapport and more profound relationships between teacher and learner.

Having had the turning point encounter, transcendent relators overcome their

suffering imposed by bigotry, oppression and repression. Through a renewed sense of self and their role in the world, they were empowered to overcome depression, limitation and tragedy and to avoid self-destructive behaviors. In one participant example, a relator overcame the terror of witnessing her mother's shock treatments while another transcended the limits of the wheelchair. In others the sense of self-worth, acquired through the transcendent relationship, even enabled them to triumph over suicide.

The invitational classroom climate has additional implications for the prevention, as well as the avoidance of self-destructive behaviors. Students and teachers identify those factors needed to create the invitational classroom climate. The development of these factors may result in maximizing the possibility for the occurance of transcendent teacher-learner relationships. The *invitations* sent to students affect their self-concepts in a way that may then effect a prevention and avoidance of self destructive patterns and behaviors. The incorporation of guidance systems to support the development of needed life skills for students and teachers (Gerler & Anderson, 1986)(Myrick, Merihill, &Swanson, 1985) (Radd, 1993a) can assist in maintaining the inviting environment and supporting the continuation of transcendent relationships.

This same process also sends an invitation for transcendence for youth at risk. Assisting in the creation of the invitational classroom climate also creates the possibilities for the transcendent teacher-learner relationship that may effect a student's desire to stay in school and invest in the learning process. Guidance systems and staff development plans can greatly support teachers by identifying personnally and professionally inviting practices to impact the inviting process (Ruben,1989) (Radd, 1993).

Conclusion

In the light of the current concerns regarding the teaching-learning process, it is increasingly critical to consciously facilitate the intentionally inviting environment in the pursuit of transcendence and transformation. If educational restructuring is to succeed, it is imperative that the components involved in the creation of invitational classroom climate be implemented to maximize the possibilities for the teacher-learner transcendent relationship to occur. It is time to consciously realize that students benefit from restructuring efforts that move beyond "schedules and content" and get with the "heart" of the teaching-learning process.

Possible recommendations for implementation are:

1. To further explore transcendent teacher-learner relationships as they may occur in context where the Grow With Guidance System is in place.
2. To further explore the transcendent phenomena and transformative power as it occurs in teacher-learner relationships.
3. To examine ways that classroom policy and procedures may be intentionally inviting to students; ways that are congruent in terms of teacher-student interaction. These congruencies can influence the development of trust.
4. To consider administering the Invitational Teaching Survey-Primary &Intermediate (ITS-P&I)... or a similar instrument to receive student feedback about the classroom climate and their feelings about being in school.
5. To develop a student performance-based, guidance system such as The Grow With Guidance System. Present a guidance curriculum where students are actively involved. Use cooperative learning and role playing when possible. Help students apply the skill

experience into their life, relate the experience to self-concept, and report their experiences back to the classroom group.

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